

Apostles Defend Their Faith

Acts 5:12-42

Bible Point:

- Keep following God, even when it's hard.

Key Verse:

- "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (James 1:2-3).



Weaving Faith Into Life:

- Kids will choose to follow God.

Lesson Sequence	What Students Will Do	Classroom Supplies	Teacher Pack Supplies
1 Getting Started	Balancing Faith (about 10 min.) Have balancing relays.	Paper, pencils	
2 Bible Story Exploration	Jail Break (about 10 min.) Try to get out of a tangled-up mess.	Bibles	
	Order in the Court (about 10 min.) Act out a courtroom scene that follows the Bible story.	Bibles, CD player	CD: "Order in the Court" (track 10), "Persevere!" (James 1:2-3) (track 11)
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	Don't Be a Dirt Clod (about 10 min.) Discover the difference between rocks and dirt clods.	Rocks, dirt clods	
	Pocket Reminders (about 10 min.) Make reminders that will help them persevere, and listen to a song about perseverance.	CD player, Bible Truth Sleuth, clear self-stick paper, scissors, glue, construction paper, small rocks, markers	CD: "Persevere!" (James 1:2-3) (track 11)

Bible Background for Teachers

Apostles Defend Their Faith

Acts 5:12-42

Jesus' resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit changed a band of confused, fearful followers into bold proclaimers of the message of Christ. They were not only bold, but they were also filled with God's power. Peter's shadow falling on someone in need brought healing! However, the praise this power and boldness brought to the name of Jesus did not please the religious leaders.

As described in Acts 4, Peter and John had been brought before the Sanhedrin for questioning and told to stop teaching in the name of Jesus. Frustrated but finding no reason to punish them, the Sanhedrin had to let them go. Now, after performing more miraculous signs and arousing more excitement among the people, all of the apostles were brought in and locked up overnight. The Sanhedrin likely intended to punish them the next day. However, the next morning, the doors and gates to the cell were still securely locked, but the prisoners were gone. Rather than accept the supernatural release of the apostles, the authorities apparently concluded that someone in the Temple police was a sympathizer and had freed the prisoners.

When the apostles were approached in the Temple court again, no force was used to bring them back to the meeting of the Sanhedrin. Had the apostles wanted to resist, the support of the crowd would have made it difficult for the religious leaders to bring them in. But the apostles didn't resist.

Notice that the high priest didn't say a word about the apostles' escape from jail. He didn't want to hear how they had been freed. He did, however, chastise them for having disobeyed the orders of the Sanhedrin. He didn't even want to utter the name of Jesus. Perhaps the high priest was afraid that the apostles would make him and the Sanhedrin look guilty for the death of Jesus. His guilt was haunting him, and he was becoming paranoid about the disciples' motives.

Peter, responding for all the apostles, was very clear. Members of the Sanhedrin couldn't disagree with the principle; they just disagreed over what it meant to obey God. Mistaken as they were, they thought they were obeying God.

Gamaliel's response to the Sanhedrin was wise. After reminding the Sanhedrin of two people who had commanded followings and later faded away, he advised the Sanhedrin to leave the apostles alone. He said that if what the apostles were doing was simply self-manufactured it would go nowhere, but if it were of God, even the Sanhedrin wouldn't be able to stop it.

Gamaliel's speech was effective. The Sanhedrin had the apostles flogged and let them go. The result? Day after day the apostles never stopped teaching about Jesus.

Devotion for Teachers

The Holy Spirit is sometimes described as a deposit assuring that God will make good on his promises of what is yet to come. The Holy Spirit guides, convicts, and inspires us as we grow in our relationship with Jesus.

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: Take a deep breath. What is this force that makes you alive, animating your body and giving you your very essence? Your spirit. This separates you from the dead. God has given his own Spirit to live in you, making you alive, animating your soul, giving you his very essence. Be fully alive!

Understanding 3rd & 4th Graders for Teachers

Most third- and fourth-graders are apt to give up when things get difficult or frustrating. They do not completely understand that practice and failure lead to mastery and talent. In addition to showing kids how important it is for them to stand up for their faith, you can also use this lesson to demonstrate how important it is for them to keep trying. Be honest about your own failures, making sure to highlight how you've had to start out on new projects or experiences as a beginner.

Easy Prep for Teachers

Song Lyrics—For each student, make a copy of the lyrics pages (pp. 107-108) of songs used in this lesson.

1 Getting Started

Balancing Faith

When everyone arrives, have kids share with a partner how they followed through on their Daily Challenges last week. Then give each student a sheet of paper and a pencil. Have students fold their papers in half lengthwise (vertically) four times. Then instruct them to turn their papers so that the fold is on the left, and have them write, "faith" vertically down the front. Form four groups. Have each group line up single file at one end of the room.

Say This activity will be a "test of faith." The object is to walk as quickly as you can to the other end of the room and back while balancing your "faith" on the back of your hand. If your faith fails, you must go to the back of the line. As soon as the first person returns to the line, the second person may go.

Have kids begin the game. When kids drop their "faith," remind them to go to the back of the line. After all of the groups have finished, have the kids sit in their groups and discuss the following questions:

Ask

- What was hard about this game? (Balancing my faith; walking quickly.)
- What was it like to try to balance your faith? (It was hard; It was easy.)
- How did you feel when you dropped your faith and had to start over? (It was frustrating; I felt rushed.)
- What's hard about being a Christian in a non-Christian world? (It's hard to say nice things; it's hard to do the right thing at school.)
- What should we do when it's hard to be a Christian? (We should ask God for help; we should pray.)

After kids finish discussing their questions,

Say Sometimes being a Christian can be hard, but we should keep following God, even when it's hard. In our Bible story today, we'll



learn about some people who knew what to do when it was hard for them to be Christians. Let's take a look at our story.

2

Bible Story Exploration

Jail Break

Have kids form a circle in the center of the room.

Say In our Bible story today, the high priest of the Sadducees arrested the apostles because he was jealous of them. The Sadducees were Jewish leaders who opposed the teachings of Jesus. The apostles had been performing many miracles and had led many people to faith in Jesus. The high priest didn't like this and threw the apostles in jail. Let's play a game to see what it was like for the apostles.

Instruct the kids to take the hands of two different kids across the circle from them.

Say You are the apostles, and you're now in jail. Without letting go of one another's hands, you have one minute to try to untangle yourselves and be set free. You may begin when I say "go."

After one minute, have kids freeze where they are. If they are close to becoming untangled, let them finish. If they are still very tangled, have them let go of one another's hands and re-form their circle.

Ask

- What was it like to be all tangled up like you were? (It was fun; it was annoying.)
- How was this like the apostles being thrown in jail? (The apostles were stuck in jail and didn't know if they'd be free again.)

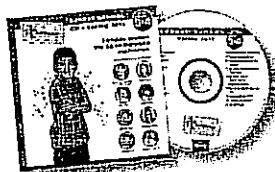
Say Let's look at our Bible story to see what happened to the apostles.

Open your Bible to Acts 5:18-20, and read the passage aloud to the class. Then instruct kids to play the game again. After kids struggle for a while, tell them that you, like the angel in Acts, are there to set them free. Unclasp several of their hands until they can untangle themselves. Then have them get their Bibles, re-form their circle, and sit down. Join them in the circle, and have a volunteer read Acts 5:21-27.

Say The Sanhedrin was an assembly of the religious leaders of those days, and those leaders really didn't like Christians. They were ready for Peter and the apostles' trial. But when the officers went to the jail, Peter and the others were gone. Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." The officers went to get Peter and the others and then brought them before the Sanhedrin for trial. We're going to pretend that we're there, with Peter and the apostles. Let's listen to the story on the CD and act out the parts as we hear them.

Order in the Court

Cue your CD to "Order in the Court." In this mock trial, ask kids to volunteer to play the following parts in a courtroom scene: judge, Peter, apostles, bailiff, Gamaliel the Pharisee, jury, a male jury member, and the audience. Arrange the room like a courtroom. For example, you could arrange a table or desk and chair for the judge's bench, a separate chair for the witness stand, and a row of chairs for the jury box. Instruct kids to act out their parts as they hear them on the CD. Begin the segment on the CD. When the segment has finished, have kids form pairs to discuss the following questions:



Ask

- How do you think the apostles felt when they heard they would be killed? (They must've been scared; they probably trusted Jesus to rescue them.)
- What bad situations have you been in that you felt you couldn't get out of? (I was caught hitting my brother; I was caught cheating in school.)
- How did you make it through the situation? (I said I was sorry; I asked for forgiveness.)
- What can you do when it's hard to be a Christian? (I can stand up for God; I can pray and ask God for help.)

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Acts 5:41-42 to finish the Bible story. Then,

Say

- The story ends with the apostles rejoicing because they had been worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

Ask

- What do you think this means? (It means they suffered because they believed in Jesus.)
- What are some examples of suffering disgrace for Jesus' name? (When we get made fun of at school for believing in Jesus; when we can't hang out late with our friends because we have church in the morning.)

Say

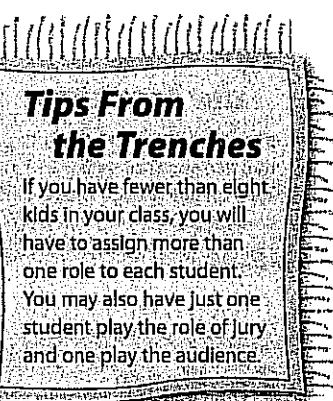
- The apostles rejoiced even though they had a hard situation to face because they did what God wanted them to do. You see, not everybody will agree with us and what we believe as Christians. Some people might even hate us. But the Bible tells us to consider it pure joy when it's hard to be Christians, because that means we're learning to persevere, or keep going, just as the apostles did in the Bible story. Let's take a look at our Key Verse.

Open your Bible to James 1:2-3, and show the passage to the kids. Then have them find the verses in their Bibles. Lead them in reading the verses aloud: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (James 1:2-3).



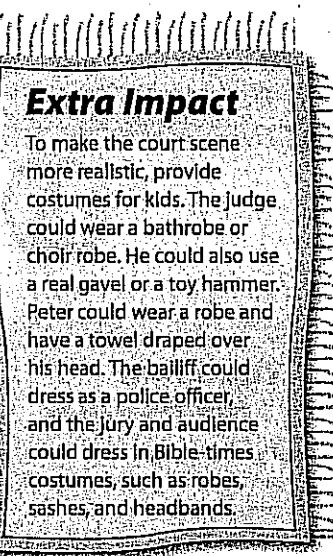
Ask

- What do you think James meant in this verse? (He meant that when things are hard, it helps us grow in our faith.)
- What are some trials you face? (My dad doesn't have a job; I failed my math test.)



Tips From the Trenches

If you have fewer than eight kids in your class, you will have to assign more than one role to each student. You may also have just one student play the role of Jury and one play the audience.



Extra Impact

To make the court scene more realistic, provide costumes for kids. The judge could wear a bathrobe or choir robe. He could also use a real gavel or a toy hammer. Peter could wear a robe and have a towel draped over his head. The bailiff could dress as a police officer, and the jury and audience could dress in Bible-times costumes, such as robes, sashes, and headbands.

• **How can you be joyful when you face trials?** (I can try harder; I can have a good attitude when things are hard.)

• **How do you feel when you've finished something that was really hard to do?** (I feel relieved that it's done; I feel much better when it's over.)

Say Now let's sing a song to help us remember our Key Verse.

Cue your CD to "Persevere!" (James 1:2-3), and play the song. Lead kids in singing the song through two or three times, referring to the copies of the lyrics if necessary.

 **Track 11**

Say OK, now let's do an activity that will help us understand what it means to persevere when times are tough.

Weaving Faith Into Life

Don't Be a Dirt Clod

Tips From the Trenches

Be sure to explain to the kids that *perseverance* means to keep on going even when it's difficult.

Tips From the Trenches

If the weather prohibits you from taking kids outside, bring the outdoors in to them! Before class, gather several rocks and clumps of dirt into a large box. Have kids do the activity on newsprint or old sheets spread out on the floor.

Tips From the Trenches

If you've brought rocks and dirt clods inside, be sure to also include pea-sized rocks.

Take kids outside to an area with rocks and dirt. Instruct each child to find one rock and one dirt clod. When everyone has found one of each, have kids sit together in a circle. You should stand in the middle of the circle.

Say Look at the two things I've asked you to gather, the rock and the dirt clod. Now let's see what happens when we put some pressure on our rocks and dirt clods. Let's first stand on our dirt clods.

Lead kids in standing on their dirt clods.

Say Now let's stand on our rocks.

Lead kids in standing on their rocks.

Ask

- **What happened to your dirt clod when you stood on it?** (It fell apart; it got crushed.)
- **What happened to your rock when you stood on it?** (It held me up; it stayed the same.)
- **How are we like these dirt clods and rocks under pressure?** (We crumble when things get hard; we are strong when things get hard.)
- **What should we do when it's hard to be a Christian?** (We should ask God for help; we should be joyful.)

Say God wants us to be rocks, not dirt clods. We should keep following God, even when it's hard. When times are tough and it's hard to be Christians, he wants us to stand firm and be solid in our faith, like a rock. He doesn't want us to crumble under the pressure of a difficult time, like a dirt clod. Remember the apostles. They stood strong and continued to tell others about Jesus, even when their lives were at stake. They were rocks! Let's make something to help us remember to be rocks in hard times.

Instruct kids to leave their rocks outside and to each find a smaller rock, the size of a pea, to bring inside with them.

Pocket Reminders

Say We're going to make something that you can keep in your pocket to remind you of our Key Verse.

Have kids turn to the "When Being a Christian Is Tough" section of their Bible Truth Sleuth pages. Give each student one half sheet of clear self-stick paper, a pair of scissors, glue, construction paper, a small rock, and markers. Instruct kids to cut out the "When Being a Christian is Tough" poem along the dotted lines and cut their self-stick paper in half. Then have them cut some construction paper a little larger than the poems and glue the construction paper to the back of the poems. Then have kids glue their small rocks in the bottom right corner of the poems. Next have them decorate the perimeter of their poems with their markers and place them between the sheets of clear self-stick paper. Finally, have students trim the edges of the clear self-stick paper to approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.

Cue your CD to "Persevere!" (James 1:2-3), and play the song while kids work. Give kids enough time to finish their pocket reminders.



Track 11

Say This poem is a special reminder for you to keep in your pocket.

When you have a hard time being a Christian, you can simply pull out your poem, read it, and remember that God will help you stand strong, just as he did for the apostles. Let's read our poems out loud together.

Have kids each choose a Daily Challenge and then circle their choice on their Bible Truth Sleuth page.

- Write the name of someone you can tell about Jesus—and be sure to follow through!
- Tell someone in your family today's Bible story. See how much you can remember!
- Each morning, pray and tell God that you're going to follow him that day!

Make sure you choose a Daily Challenge as well, and tell the kids what you chose. Kids will be more inclined to follow through on their commitments when they see you doing the same!

Then lead kids in a prayer, asking God to help them persevere when being Christians is difficult.

